

In the claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1 – 17 withdrawn.

18. (Currently Amended) A material suitable for use in the manufacture of a shoe stiffner comprising a layer of a stiffner composition disposed between two layers of sheet material, wherein the stiffner composition [including] comprises a polymeric material which is stiff at ambient temperature and is pliable, adhesive and flowable under pressure at an elevated temperature, wherein at least one of said layers of sheet material [having] has openings therein of [such] a size sufficient to allow the polymeric material, when subjected to elevated temperature and pressure, to pass through the openings, and wherein the polymeric material does not pass through the openings when the material is at the ambient temperature [so when the stiffner composition is heated to said elevated temperature, the stiffner can be readily manipulated and positioned in a shoe upper and thereafter subjected to pressure to causer enough of said polymeric material to flow through the openings in the sheet material and adhere to the adjacent shoe upper material, whereby to bond the stiffner in the shoe].

19. (Currently Amended) A material according to claim [22] 18 wherein said elevated temperature is between 50°C and 90°C, said openings have a size range from 0.15 mm² to 5 mm² and the melt viscosity of the polymeric material is measured at 100°C being in the range of 100 [PAS] to 10,000 [Pas] Pascal times a second.


20. (Currently Amended) A material suitable for the use in manufacture of a shoe stiffner comprising a stiffner composition disposed between two layers of sheet material, wherein the stiffner composition [including] comprises a polymeric material which is stiff at ambient temperature below 50°C but is pliable and adhesive at an elevated temperature between 50°C and 90°C and has a melt viscosity measured at 100°C in the range from 100 [Pas] to 10,000 [Pas] Pascal times a second, [and] wherein at least one of said layers of sheet material has openings

therein in a size range from 0.15 mm^2 to 5 mm^2 and wherein the polymeric material is adhesive and is contained within one or more of the openings of the sheet material.

~~21.~~ (Currently Amended) A material according to claims [22 or 24] 18 or 20, wherein the melt viscosity of the polymeric material at 100°C is in the range of 900 [Pas] to 2500 [Pas] Pascal times a second.

22. (Currently Amended) A material according to claims [22 or 24] 18 or 20, wherein the openings have a size range from about 0.3 mm^2 to 1.5 mm^2 .

~~23.~~ (Currently Amended) A material according to [any one of the preceding] claims 18 or 20, wherein the shoe stiffner material has a thickness between about 0.4 mm to 2.00 mm.

 ~~24.~~ (Currently Amended) A material according to [any one of the preceding] claims 18 or 20, wherein the stiffner composition comprises between 85% and 30% by weight of said polymeric material and 15% and 70% by weight of particulate filler.

~~25.~~ (Currently Amended) A material according to claim [28] 24, wherein the particulate filler has a size between 50 microns and 500 microns.

~~26.~~ (Currently Amended) A material according to claim: [28] 24, wherein the size of the particulate filler is between 100 microns and 400 microns.

~~27.~~ (Currently Amended) A material according to [any one of] claim [28 or 29] 24, wherein the filler is mica.

~~28.~~ (Currently Amended) A material according to [any one of] claim [28 or 29] 24, wherein the filler is talc.

~~29~~. (Currently Amended) A material according to [any one of the preceding] claims 18 or 20, wherein the polymeric material comprises polycaprolactone.

~~30~~. (Currently Amended) A material according to any one of claims [22] 18 or [33] 20 wherein the polymeric material comprises poly(tetramethylene-adipate).

~~31~~. (Currently Amended) A material according to [any one of the preceding] claims 18 or 20, wherein at least one of said layers of sheet material is a woven fabric.

~~32~~. (Currently Amended) A material according to [any one of the preceding] claims 18 or 20, wherein at least one of said layers of sheet material is a knitted fabric.

~~33~~. (Currently Amended) A material according to [any one of the preceding] claims 18 to 20, wherein at least one of said layers of sheet material is an apertured non-woven fabric.

Claims 34 – 36 withdrawn.

Please insert the following new claims:

~~37~~. (New) A shoe stiffner comprising: a shoe stiffner composition disposed between two layers of sheet material and an upper, wherein the stiffener composition comprises a polymeric material which is stiff at ambient temperature below 50°C but is pliable and adhesive at an elevated temperature between 50°C and 90°C and has a melt viscosity measured at 100°C in the range from 100 to 10,000 Pascal times a second, wherein at least one of said layers of sheet material has openings therein of a size sufficient to allow the polymeric material to pass through the openings, and wherein the polymeric material is adhesive, has passed through one or more of the openings of the sheet material and is adhered to the upper.

~~38~~. (New) The shoe stiffner of claim 37, wherein both of the layers of sheet material have openings therein of a size sufficient to allow the polymeric material to pass through the openings.

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39. (New) The shoe stiffner of claim 38, wherein the shoe stiffner further comprises a lining material.

40. (New) The shoe stiffener of claim 39, wherein the adhesive has passed through at least one opening in each of the sheet materials, and is adhered to the upper on one side and the lining material on the other side.

41. (New) The shoe stiffner of claim 40, wherein the lining material comprises a non-woven textile fiber.
